

# Films on Race and Sexuality

Presented by Rita and Bill Hadden

Proprietary: do not share without  
written permission

# 8-week Outline (key film excerpts shown in class)

- 1. The Wedding Banquet (1993)
- 2. Gran Torino (2008)
- 3. The Crying Game (1992)
- 4. The Hate U Give (2018)
- 5. American Beauty (1999)
- 6. Passing (2021)
- 7. The Danish Girl (2015)
- 6. Green Book (2018)
- QUESTIONS?

# Green Book (2018)

## • Awards / recognition:

- Premiere at the Toronto International Film Festival on September 11, 2018, where it won the People's Choice Award. It grossed \$321 million worldwide.
- Won the Academy Award for Best Picture, Best Original Screenplay, and Best Supporting Actor (for Ali). It also won the Producers Guild of America Award for Best Theatrical Motion Picture, the Golden Globe Award for Best Motion Picture – Musical or Comedy, and the National Board of Review award for the best film of 2018.

# Green Book (2)

## Awards / recognition (cont'd):

- Chosen as one of the top 10 films of the year by the American Film Institute. Ali also won the Golden Globe, Screen Actors Guild, and BAFTA Awards for Best Supporting Actor.

**Written** by Peter Farrelly, Nick Vallelonga, Brian Hayes Currie.

**Director:** Peter Farrelly. Brother Bobby and Peter are famous for directing/producing quirky/roantic comedies such as: Dumb and Dumber; Shallow Hal; Me, Myself and Irene; There's Something About Mary; and the 2007 remake of The Heartbreak Kid.

# Green Book (3)

## Synopsis:

Dr Don Shirley is a world-class African-American pianist, who is about to embark on a concert tour in the Deep South in 1962. In need of a driver and protection, Shirley recruits Tony Lip, a tough-talking bouncer from an Italian-American neighborhood in the Bronx. Despite their differences, the two men soon develop an unexpected bond while confronting racism and danger in an era of segregation.

# Green Book (4)

**SETTING:** Bronx, NYC; America's 1962 segregated deep South.

## **MAIN CHARACTERS:**

- Dr. Don Shirley: African American accomplished concert pianist;
- Tony Lip: Italian bouncer and Don's driver;
- Dolores: Tony's wife;
- Amit: Don's servant.

# Green Book Themes (5)

- Direct opposites finding common ground;
- Isolation/Loneliness due to high achievement;
- Dialogue/words no longer common in conversation;
- Racial discrimination in America in 1962.

# **DISCUSSION: what would you say Green Book is about and WHY?**

- White savior trope?
- Over-simplifying the complex?
- Racial reconciliation fantasy?
- Meritocracy?
- Sundown towns?
- Lifelong friendships?



# Green Book (7)

## Questions for discussion:

- The tour takes them into the segregated South. Some argue that there is no institutionalized racism in America. Do you agree?
- Do the racial attitudes of the police differ?
- What do you know about sundown towns?
- The racism at the plantation and restaurant is less violent, but is it less institutionalized?

# Green Book (8)

## Questions for discussion:

- Tony and Don have difficult exchanges over racial identities. Where do they bring in ethnic identity?
- How do Tony and Don define their race? What markers of race do they use?
- Do you agree that Tony is blacker than Don?

# Green Book (9)

## Questions for discussion:

- In the clip with the plumbers in the kitchen, what racial attitudes do we see? How does ethnicity play in that scene?
- What does Tony mean when he says, “Do I look Irish?” Do you think the barmaid understands it the same way?
- Tony is a complex character. How does he reveal himself when he says, “[life] is complicated?”

# Green Book (10)


## Questions for discussion:

- Don Shirley emphasizes class differences. How does Tony respond?
- Oleg says Don wants to change the world? Do you think he makes any progress on this trip?
- Do we see the world change in the last scene? Is this realistic?
- Is this film's approach to race naïve and romanticized? Why or why not?
- What else did this film get wrong? What did it get right?

# Green Book (11)

## Questions for discussion:

- Do you think that a well-to-do black artist could employ domestics that did not look like him in 1962 in America?
- Do Don's southern hosts respect his talents?
- How did Don help Tony change his attitudes about good citizenship?
- Which character(s) strike you as not racist in this film and why?



***For questions and information,  
contact:***

**Rita Hadden**  
**rhadden@gmail.com**  
**202-244-3268**

**Bill Hadden**  
**wchadden@gmail.com**  
**202-250-1942**